

The limits of hot spots policing

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Introduction

This author is a strong advocate of using sophisticated information technology and the latest research findings to guide decisionmaking in police organizations. Hence, this article begins with a brief acknowledgment of the potential benefits of hot spot policing in theory, followed by a serious critique. The thesis of this chapter is that, while the concept of hot spots policing is attractive, we should be disappointed in how scholars have narrowly defined it in theory and research and how police organizations have narrowly practiced it. This approach has failed to embody the fundamental principles of either problem-oriented policing or community policing, which many scholars believe represent the basic pillars of “good policing” in the twenty-first century.

Acknowledging the benefits

The concept of hot spots is indisputable as a criminological phenomenon and suggests the need for focused responses. From the very beginning of criminological inquiries in nineteenth century France, scholars noted that criminal activity is not randomly distributed, but rather varies by geographic area such as regions, states, and communities (see Eck and Weisburd 1995). More recent micro-level analyses have focused on sizable variations between and within urban neighborhoods. Hence, a sensible policy implication is to recommend the concentration of more resources in these high-crime areas, including police resources (Sherman, Gottfredson, MacKenzie *et al.* 1997). The most important question, however, is not whether we should assign more resources to problem areas, but rather, what resources should be deployed and how should they be deployed?

Also, the concept of data-driven policing is difficult to dispute. Relying on information to make decisions about tactics, strategies, and programmatic interventions, assuming the data are accurate and complete, is

preferred to “cursing the dark” or making decisions primarily on the basis of personal whim, personal experience, opinions of friends, or political pressure. On the basis of controlled evaluation research, hot spots researchers have encouraged the police to focus their attention on geographic areas smaller than police beats, including addresses, with a high concentration of activity or repeat calls for service (e.g., Sherman, Gartin, and Buerger 1989; Sherman and Weisburd 1995). Building on these studies and the revolution in information technology, including mapping programs (Mamalian and LaVigne 1999), the field has witnessed the strategic deployment of police personnel in response to geo-based patterns of crime incidents and calls for service. New York’s Compstat program was a trendsetter in the 1990s and Chicago’s CLEAR program epitomizes the IT capabilities of law enforcement for the next decade (Skogan, Steiner, Hartnett *et al.* 2002).

Short-term impact

Hot spots policing, when implemented under controlled experimental conditions with researchers involved, appears to have some effects on crime and disorder (for reviews, see Sherman 1997; Taylor 1998; Braga 2001; Weisburd and Eck 2004). But the qualifications on this conclusion are extremely important: first, the effects on crime are small and not as consistent as the effects on disorder. Second, and most importantly, the effects dissipate quickly. Sherman’s (1990) review of the police crackdown literature indicates that any residual deterrence effect is weak and likely to decay rapidly. The conclusion regarding drug market crackdowns is that they are ineffective in controlling drug hot spots. In one of the stronger experimental tests, crime dropped on targeted blocks in Kansas City after raids of crack houses, but returned within seven days, leading the authors to conclude, “Like aspirin for arthritis, the painkiller does nothing to remedy the underlying condition” (Sherman and Rogan 1995a: 777). For directed patrols of high-crime locations, the best research in Minneapolis suggests a positive relationship between the length of patrol presence at a hot spot and the length of the deterrent effect, up to 15 minutes, after which time, the effect reverses (Koper 1995).

The implication of these findings are that (1) the enormous expense of concentrating police resources, especially for drug market crackdowns, is difficult to justify given the cost of sustaining the effect; (2) a more sophisticated understanding of deterrence is required before police are ready to implement high-impact “schedules of punishment”; and (3) the absence of larger and more sustained effects suggests the need for a

more complete understanding of the criminogenic forces at work in hot spots. Much more evaluation research is needed in this area, especially using randomized longitudinal designs.

Problem definition

What follows is a critique of hot spots policing from a problem-oriented and community policing framework, beginning with the definition of the problem. Engaging in “good” hot spot policing is not feasible if the hot spot itself cannot be easily identified or well defined. The definitional problem is complex and involves both conceptual and operational issues. At the conceptual level, we need to ask, how does a particular place achieve the status of being a “hot spot”? And who decides – the police on the street, administrators or politicians, or the community? Generally, the police have decided that a hot spot is a place where there are too many violent crimes, drug deals, or gangs. But why is the definition of “the problem” so narrowly construed? Undoubtedly, urban neighborhoods have hot spots of public fear of crime, hot spots of public hostility toward the police, of slum landlords, of racial profiling, disorder, weak informal social control, institutional disinvestments, and weak interagency partnership, to name just a few. Yet these problems are not treated as hot spots because they are not police priorities, because they are not well measured or understood, and because they do not fit within the traditional definition of the police function.

The notion of hot spots, even if expanded, still limits the definition of the problem to geographically linked phenomena. This approach overlooks a number of serious crime-related problems that are not structured in this way. Terrorism, computer crime, economic and international crime, and even drug trafficking are examples of serious problems that stretch beyond small geographic or neighborhood boundaries. Even gang homicide, which is associated with geography, is best understood in terms of the social structure of the gang and social interactions rather than location (Papachristos 2003). In fact, the Boston Gun Project was a big success because it focused on disrupting conflicts between gangs rather than on the places where shots were fired (Braga, Kennedy, Piehl, and Waring 2001). Hence, place-based conceptions can sometimes restrict our ability to understand and respond effectively to serious crime problems, even those that cluster in space and time.

Even if we accept the traditional concept of hot spots, we still face serious problems trying to identify and operationally define them. First, the judgments of individual officers about hot spots can be inaccurate if not supported by computer analysis of larger samples. Second, when

community input is sought, the police and local residents often disagree when evaluating and prioritizing neighborhood problems (Skogan *et al.* 2002). Third, when GIS mapping software is employed, the hot spot boundaries can be “fuzzy” (Taylor 1998). Circles can be imposed over data plots, but in reality, these are somewhat arbitrary cut-offs. Where does one hot spot end and another begin? In high-crime neighborhoods this can be a serious problem. If a hot spot is enlarged, then what is the benefit of a focused deployment scheme? If the hot spot is circumscribed to a small area, the risk of making a false positive identification has been increased. One can question whether small hot spots that come and go quickly are sufficiently stable to warrant this label.

Finally, the selection of places as hot spots on the basis of extreme scores (e.g., a spike in violence during the past month) can lead police managers and researchers to draw false conclusions about the effectiveness of hot spots policing. “Regression to the mean” – a statistical artifact that would show up as a decline in the crime rate regardless of policing efforts – is more likely under these circumstances, so a strong evaluation design is needed to avoid making false causal inferences about the effectiveness of intensive directed policing (see Shadish, Cook, and Campbell 2003).

Weak problem analysis

Identifying a hot spot is not the same as understanding it. The analysis phase of problem-oriented policing is often lacking in hot spots policing. Too often the data analysis team is satisfied with colorful crime maps as the final product. Rarely do we see a detailed analysis of the characteristics of the hot spot and the nature of the problem. How much can we really learn about the problem from the spatial distribution of calls about drug transactions, crime incidents, or arrests? A thorough and comprehensive analysis of the hot spot would require that these data be placed in the larger environmental context. Knowing the physical and social milieu is critical for understanding the factors that facilitate and constrain hot spot behaviors. Census, housing, and survey data can be used to triangulate police data. Interviews and observations of users of the hot spot environment are essential (see Rosenbaum and Lavrakas 1995). The real problems are hidden behind the calls for service or arrest data. The real story is more complex, more dynamic, and more difficult to summarize. Without digging deeper, the police responses will be standardized and superficial, thus resulting in either short-term impact or no impact at all.

For the modern high-tech police organization, the information managers believe that the most sophisticated type of hot spot analysis involves using real-time data to engage in “crime forecasting” and deployment.

Analyses of monthly or weekly data are used to identify emerging hot spots and deploy officers in a proactive, preventative manner. But statisticians will caution against making this type of prediction because the estimates are unstable within small geographic areas using small amounts of data (Spelman 1995). Yet police commanders today can be chided for a single shooting in a hot spot area.

Narrow and predictable response options

After the police (and hopefully, the community) identify and analyze the hot spot, they are still facing the problem of what to do about it. On this topic, only rarely have the police followed the guidance of Herman Goldstein (1990: 102), the father of problem-oriented policing: “This requires a process both broad and uninhibited – broad in that it breaks out of the rigid mindset of the past, and uninhibited in that it explores sensible responses without regard, at least initially, to potential impediments to adopting them.” Instead, police departments have turned to what they have done for years: patrols, sweeps, stakeouts, buy and busts, reverse stings, etc. The responses are narrow and predictable – surveillance, stop and frisk, question, and arrest – regardless of the nature and causes of the problem. Goldstein (1990) encouraged a systematic inquiry into the nature of these problems and the creation of strategic responses that would likely be effective in reducing or eliminating them. Frankly, I do not see this happening in American law enforcement. Problem analysis tends to be superficial, non-existent, or based on a limited set of specific criteria. Responses tend to be prepackaged, cookie-cutter reactions rather than tailored, researched strategic plans for solving or eliminating the problem over the long haul.

The simple fact that crime is concentrated in identifiable locations does not justify the geographic concentration of limited police resources unless the police have a compelling plan for dealing with the problem. What is the plan? What is the theory of action behind the plan? Why should it work? How long will it work? What are the potential adverse effects of the plan? How is “success” defined and when is a problem “solved”? Arguably, short-term reductions in crime and disorder are overrated and give the false impression that the problem has been solved. This is a very expensive way to run an organization.

The deterrence model

One major reason that hot spots policing tactics are not likely to have a *sustained* impact on serious crime is because they are not based on

a compelling understanding of criminality or the larger hot spot environment. The importance of place (hot spots) in crime causation and prevention can be viewed through the lenses of rational choice theory (Cornish and Clarke 1986), routine activity theory (Cohen and Felson 1979), crime pattern theory (Brantingham and Brantingham 1993), or social disorganization theory (Bursik and Grasmick 1993; Sampson 2002). But hot spots policing, in practice, is not so sophisticated and reflects a basic deterrence model. Directed patrols, undercover intelligence gathering, visible surveillance systems (such as cameras), and various types of aggressive enforcement in the target areas are hypothesized to deter offending by increasing the actual and perceived risk of detection, apprehension, and punishment. The preventative focus of hot spots policing tends to be the potential offender's fear of punishment and not the other elements of criminal opportunity in the environment (e.g., victims, witnesses, social control agents, physical features) that influence offender motivation. Repeat offenders often do not fear punishment and have become increasingly sophisticated in avoiding it. Also, police sanctioning of gang members can be viewed as a "badge of honor" (Klein 1999). Suffice it to say that subjective assessments of risk by potential offenders (the key element!) are based on a variety of factors, including the perceived certainty, severity, and speed of punishment (Tittle and Paternoster 2000). Unfortunately, the criminal justice system has failed to deliver on these threats in a consistent manner and has not demonstrated an understanding of the complexity of the deterrence processes.

Deterrence theories are based on the assumption that people are rational and accurate processors of information, but research suggests that we are not good at estimating probabilities of events, and we often ignore or misperceive information presented to us (e.g., Kahneman and Tversky 1973; Nisbett and Ross 1980; Kahneman, Slovic, and Tversky 1982). This is not to say that people are always irrational. In general, individuals have their own rationality and logic that is not always evident to those empowered to administer formal sanctions. Selling drugs or carrying a gun on the streets may seem "irrational" to the average person, but these behaviors can seem very sensible to the person who faces daily threats of bodily injury or theft of contraband, sees no good employment opportunities, and has nothing to lose from another arrest.

Community and problem-oriented theories

Hot spots policing, in practice, is like old wine in new bottles. Police continue to do what they do best – undercover and visible enforcement activities – but with greater efficiency and focus on specific locations.

Police administrators ask themselves: How can we deploy more police officers (and the right officers) to these locations to make more arrests and seize more contraband? The real question should be, What are the best strategies to combat crime, disorder, and quality of life in these hot spots given all that we know about these problems, these locations, and the many resources that can be leveraged (including non-police resources)?

Theories of community policing (e.g., Skogan 1990; Greene 2000; Skogan 2003), problem-oriented policing (Goldstein 1990), and community crime prevention (Tonry and Farrington 1995; Rosenbaum, Lurigio, and Davis 1998) have, to all intents and purposes, been ignored in hot spots policing, despite advocates' claims to the contrary. These models all suggest that police would be unwise to limit their focus to pictures of *where* crime is occurring, and should give more attention to *why* it is occurring. Hot spots policing somehow leaves the impression that our knowledge of hot spots is limited to GIS plots of crime incidents. In fact, we know a lot more about hot spots, and this knowledge could be exploited to develop lasting solutions to neighborhood problems. Criminologists have examined the role of the physical environment, families, peers, schools, neighborhood resources, housing policies, labor markets, social organization processes, public attitudes, gun markets, offender re-entry problems, and many other factors that contribute to crime, disorder, and deviance within specific geographies (see Tonry and Farrington 1995; Tittle and Paternoster 2000; Wilson and Petersilia 2002). Our knowledge of how to prevent crime is substantial! The only question here is whether the police have any role in converting this knowledge into practice. The argument here is that they do.

Police as experts on crime

Over the years, police organizations have acquired an image of "effective crime fighters" and "experts" on crime in general, thus receiving the lion's share of taxpayer dollars for public safety programs. To justify this reputation, law enforcement must demonstrate a deeper knowledge of the forces that contribute to crime and the quality of urban life. Educated people can disagree about whether the police have any responsibility to reach beyond short-term strategies to address the underlying, chronic causes of crime. (Most police officers would say, "that's not our job.") I would argue that law enforcement leaders can play an important role by (1) working with criminologists to educate policymakers and the public about what can, and should be, done to prevent crime; (2) creating and leading multiagency partnerships that have a higher probability of yielding a sustainable impact on crime; and (3) focusing on comprehensive

strategies that attack crime at all levels (Rosenbaum 2002; Schuck and Rosenbaum forthcoming). Unfortunately, hot spots policing can reinforce the persistent public misperception that police can solve the crime problem alone, without the help of the communities they serve, other government agencies, or the private sector.

A close adherence to the principles of problem-oriented policing would, I believe, lead most police administrators to question current stand-alone hot spots practices. The urban problems of youth violence cannot be explained by simple statements such as, “kids make bad choices and they need to pay the price” or “our job is to take the scumbags and gang bangers off the street.” The solutions are much more complex and, furthermore, most convicted offenders will return to the neighborhood within a year or two. The goal of problem-oriented policing is to eliminate the problem, not to increase the efficiency of the response. Furthermore, a major goal of community policing is to achieve fair and equitable policing through community input and feedback, not just to achieve efficient policing (Eck and Rosenbaum 1994). Hot spots policing, as currently practiced, may be at odds with these goals for reasons noted below.

Adverse effects of hot spots policing

Arguably, hot spots policing is not only ineffective at solving persistent problems, but is potentially harmful to both targeted and non-targeted communities. Some of the potential untoward effects of hot spots policing are discussed in this section.

Displacement effects

One of the big question marks surrounding hot spots policing is about possible displacement effects. If hot spots policing is simply altering criminal activity by location, time, modus operandi, or type of offense, rather than preventing it, then the collective benefits to the larger community are non-existent. The problem of displacement, if occurring, may indicate that non-targeted residents or locations are suffering *more* because additional criminal activity is being pushed into their environment.

Criminologists are divided on this issue and the evidence is mixed. Most evaluations do not define and measure displacement adequately if at all, and most research designs are biased in favor of the null hypothesis (Weisburd and Green 1995a). Some studies suggest there is evidence of diffusion of crime control benefits to nearby areas (see Sherman and Rogan 1995b; Weisburd and Green 1995b; Green-Mazerolle and Roehl 1998; Braga *et al.* 1999), but some of these effects may reflect a

mis-specification of the target area boundaries. On the other side of the fence, there is considerable evidence of spatial displacement of calls or crime incidents as a result of police crackdowns, especially during drug enforcement (e.g., Kleiman 1988; Potter, Gaines, and Holbrook 1990; Smith, Sviridoff, Sadd *et al.* 1992; Uchida, Forst, and Annan 1992; Kennedy 1993; Hope 1994; Sherman and Rogan 1995a; Braga *et al.* 1999; Maher and Dixon 2001). A meta-analysis by Sherman (1997), however, suggests that displacement effects are not as large as crime prevention effects, but the research in this field is inconclusive. Clearly, there are many types of displacement that have not been measured.

Police–community relations

Hot spots policing, because it has been operationally defined as aggressive enforcement in specific areas, runs the risk of weakening police–community relations (see Kleiman 1988; Worden, Bynum, and Frank 1994; Sherman 1997; Rosenbaum *et al.* 1998). Hot spots policing can easily become zero tolerance policing and broken windows policing since these are models that police find easy to adopt. These tactics can drive a wedge between the police and the community, as the latter can begin to feel like targets rather than partners. Because the police have chosen to focus on removing the “bad element” and serving as the “thin blue line” between “good” and “bad” residents, these strategies can pit one segment of the community against another, as the “good” residents are asked to serve as the informants and the “eyes and ears” of police. Parents, siblings, and friends of gang members and drug dealers can feel a divided loyalty and be caught in the crossfire.

The success of police organizations depends largely on the cooperation of the citizenry, but the legitimacy of the institution is compromised when the public’s trust and confidence in the police is undermined. The consequences are enormous, ranging from lawsuits to a declining willingness to obey the law (e.g., Tyler 1990; 2001). What determines public trust in the police? The answer is complex (see Weitzer and Tuch *in press*). Certainly, perceptions of police effectiveness in lowering crime rates is one factor that affects attitudes about the police, but research indicates that it is not as important as procedural justice during the exercise of authority (Skogan *in press*; Tyler *in press*). That is, positive attitudes about the police drop when citizens feel that they have been treated unfairly, disrespected, not listened to, or physically abused during encounters with the police. Minorities, who are much more likely than non-minorities to live in hot spot areas, express these sentiments at much higher rates than

whites (Rosenbaum, Hawkins, Costello, Skogan *et al.* 2005; Skogan in press).

We must acknowledge that residents of high-crime areas are very ambivalent about aggressive enforcement. Many demand it and are pleased to see the police restore order. In fact, surveys indicate that many are willing to give up their civil liberties to achieve this sense of security, however fleeting (Rosenbaum 1993). Residents will insist on aggressive enforcement up to the point where it directly affects them, their family, or their friends, who frequently end up in jail and prison or report being mistreated by the police. How much of this policing they will tolerate remains to be seen. Like other Americans, however, hot spots residents should have the opportunity to experience both safety *and* liberty and not be required to choose one or the other. This topic demands much more careful policy deliberation and research.

Abusive policing

Hot spots policing, as practiced, runs the risk of becoming abusive and/or corrupt policing. When officers feel the pressure to make arrests, seize drugs, and seize guns, some will be inclined to cut corners and, as a result, every officer's credibility is compromised. Complaints about excessive force and police corruption are not uncommon in hot spots neighborhoods where police are sometimes viewed as an "occupying force." The issue of due process is critical to the criminal justice system. A twenty-year prosecutor recently summarized the problem for me in this way: "Winking at questionable stops and arrests may serve to get major waves of contraband off the streets for a while but it eventually begins to draw the ire of the judiciary and threatens the credibility of both the police and that of the prosecuting authorities" (Andreou, personal communication, 2003).

Stigma from labeling

There is a real risk that neighborhoods and smaller areas identified as hot spots will acquire a more negative image as a result of the labeling process. In some cases, the stigma of being a hot spot of crime may stimulate greater fear of crime among residents (both inside and outside the neighborhood) and eventually lower property values. Granted, some hot spots already have a bad reputation, but others on the margins could be further damaged by the labeling process. Yet police face a "Catch 22." The adverse effects of labeling could be minimized by keeping the identity of the location confidential and internal to the police, but that

would prevent the department from soliciting community support for aggressive police interventions.

Policing bias by race and class

We cannot avoid the fact that policing tactics and strategies vary by race and social class. These differences are due, in part, to data-driven deployment of police officers on the basis of crime hot spots. Violence and illicit drug activity are most visible in low-income, minority communities and, therefore, these areas receive a disproportionate share of police attention in response to public demand. By definition, the pressure on the police to lower crime rates is greatest in these hot spot areas.

The problem is that civil liberties are more easily jeopardized in low-income and minority neighborhoods where residents feel disenfranchised and do not have easy access to legal remedies when feeling mistreated. Minority communities are the primary focus of not only drug and gun enforcement, but also minor disorders (e.g., hanging out, public drinking) and various types of traffic enforcement activities (e.g., road checks for seat belt usage and drinking). Following the lead of New York City and the “broken windows” model, a commonly employed strategy is to use these police-initiated contacts (often involving minor infractions) as a tool to identify weapons, drugs, guns, and persons with outstanding warrants. One problem is that the “hit rate” is extremely low, so the vast majority of persons who are inconvenienced (if not offended) by these stops are innocent persons of color and limited means.

Beyond inconvenience is the troubling question of police abuse, which, as it turns out, is not randomly distributed. Looking at twenty years of data in New York, one study concluded that police misconduct seems to be attracted to neighborhoods with structural disadvantage, population mobility, and increases in the Latino population, among other factors (Kane 2002). So, neighborhoods that suffer the most from crime are also areas where the police are more likely to violate the rules of conduct.

Finally, there is the macro-level question regarding the long-term consequences of applying greater enforcement resources to minority communities. The bottom line, after the criminal justice system has completed its work, is called “disproportionate minority confinement.” Minorities are being confined and incarcerated at much higher rates than non-minorities (for a review, see Pope, Lovell, and Hsia 2003), which will continue to be a hotly debated political issue. This begs the question of whether we can solve these neighborhood problems differently.

In sum, the style and consequences of policing in low-income minority communities are often different than in middle-class neighborhoods and

the application of enforcement tactics in specific locations is increasingly driven by hot spot analyses.

Direct and opportunity costs

Intensifying police resources in hot spots can be expensive in terms of added personnel costs and additional activity for the criminal justice system. The options are to increase the police budget, borrow resources from other neighborhoods, or discontinue the program after a short period. Intensive policing is simply not affordable in many cases and, therefore, not sustainable in the absence of careful planning about deployment.

A bigger concern is the opportunity costs associated with hot spots policing. In other words, what is the police department *not* doing because it is involved in hot spots policing? First, there is a tendency to reduce police resources in low and moderate crime neighborhoods by creating special teams, transferring personnel, or redrawing beat boundaries. Low crime communities may feel shortchanged, but moderate crime communities may experience crime increases. Second, there may be a tendency to reduce police resources for community policing and joint problem-solving activities.

Opportunity costs come in many sizes and shapes. One could argue that hot spots policing discourages an intelligent public policy debate about long-term solutions to our crime problems. As noted earlier, this type of policing is designed to leave the public with the impression that crime is under control, thus contributing to the image of law enforcement agencies as effective crime-fighting machines.

Unanticipated effects on crime

Arrest (and for some, conviction and incarceration) does not always have the desired deterrent effects, and may even produce boomerang effects. A couple of examples will suffice. First, there is some evidence that arresting inner-city youths can have a criminogenic effect of increasing, rather than reducing, the probability of recidivism (Klein 1986). Second, there is evidence that having a criminal record reduces one's probability of finding gainful employment (Bushway 1996). The plight of 600,000 ex-offenders who return from prison each year illustrates the many legal and social obstacles they face to successful reintegration (Travis, Solomon, and Waul 2001), thus explaining why most return to a life of crime. Also, the extent to which law enforcement agencies use technology to track and monitor ex-offenders by address is unprecedented.

In sum, our criminal justice system may be having criminogenic effects, making crime more probable for those who are targeted, arrested, and

labeled (many for life) as “criminals.” This is especially troubling for the large volume of incidents involving misdemeanor and non-violent drug offenses and raises the question of whether aggressive enforcement activity in high-crime neighborhoods is helping or hurting public safety in the long run. Someday, we will take the time to answer these questions.

Collective efficacy

Neighborhoods with high rates of violent crime that are typically the target of hot spots policing also suffer from social disorganization and a lack of collective efficacy in solving problems (Sampson, Raudenbush, and Earls 1997). “Get tough” policies run the risk of further undermining social control and a community’s capacity for self-regulation. By strengthening the hand of the police to solve crime-related problems, the residents may feel less empowered to solve neighborhood problems. Policymakers may need to be reminded that community crime rates, in the final analysis, are influenced more by the social ecology of communities than by formal control mechanisms (Sampson 2002). Hence, within the community policing framework, a primary mission of police organizations should be to work with other organizations to design strategies that strengthen community capacity rather than to supplant or weaken the role of community. But in fairness to the police, restoring order would seem to be a necessary element in the process of restoring community capacity. The only question is about the means of restoring order, the timeframe, and the strategies that will accompany these police activities.

Rethinking hot spots policing

If police can rethink the concept of place, the notion of hot spots policing can be given new meaning. I would encourage police departments to adopt a more holistic approach to problems that cluster in space and time, including: (1) conducting an in-depth, comprehensive analysis of the hot spot environment and the many factors that are responsible for making the area “hot”; (2) exploring a wide range of alternative solutions that might reasonably be expected to have either a short-term or long-term impact on the problem (both are important!); (3) attempting to build real partnerships among government, private sector, and community organizations that have a stake in public safety; and (4) giving more attention to the prevention of crime at the individual, family, and community levels.

The Chicago Police Department (CPD) is an interesting case study that seeks to achieve some of these objectives. While investing in enforcement-oriented hot spots policing, the CPD is also pursuing a more holistic

approach to hot spots. First, in selected hot spot locations, the CPD has sought to expand the responsibility for crime control to third parties, such as landlords and business owners, using both rewards and sanctions to clean up entire blocks. Second, the superintendent's office has also taken a leadership role in building a coalition of organizations to address hot spots of violence in selected areas of the city and to provide feedback on police performance. Third, Chicago has a nationally recognized community policing effort (CAPS) that allows community concerns to be aired in monthly beat meetings. As part of this process, the CPD is working with the University of Illinois at Chicago to develop a geo-based Internet survey that will "measure what matters" to the public, including indicators of hot spots of disorder, fear, and strained police–community relations, among other factors. These new data are expected to result in new definitions of local problems, a stronger community policing/problem-solving process, and greater accountability for all parties (Rosenbaum 2004). Thus, police departments can supplement traditional hot spots enforcement with community policing and/or problem-oriented policing approaches (for other examples, see Weisburd and Green 1995b; Eck and Wartell 1996; Green-Mazerolle and Roehl 1998; Braga *et al.* 1999).

In this chapter I have suggested that the concept of hot spots, despite its theoretical and empirical attractiveness, can create problems that were unintended. Police administrators and researchers need to exercise caution when labeling and responding to locations in a narrow manner, given the political and social sensitivities associated with hot spots. Aggressive enforcement has its place in the arsenal of urban policing and is essential for providing short-term relief to distressed areas, but it should not be used as a stand-alone strategy or as society's primary answer to crime. Also, it requires close supervision of police officers and regular feedback from the community members to prevent abuses. Most importantly, given the central role of urban law enforcement agencies in public policy analysis, the argument put forth here is that the majority of tax-based police resources should be devoted to strategies that (1) show promise for *long-term* impact on rates of community crime and the quality of community life; (2) reflect the equitable distribution of police resources based on human need; and (3) embody the police organization's commitment to the fair and impartial treatment of all segments of society.

In essence, hot spots policing, as currently practiced, does not adequately address the historical, economic, political, social, and cultural dimensions of these target areas, all of which contribute to crime rates. The solution is not as simple as getting local residents, under the threat of arrest, to make better choices or accept responsibility for their

behavior. These assumptions are overly simplistic and do not acknowledge the loss of hope and despair among these residents, their disconnection from conventional institutions, the stigma and rejection that result from having a criminal record, the neighborhood's loss of public and private resources to support healthy families, and the fact that dozens of other social problems (beyond crime) cluster in these hot spots. Hence, real solutions in these hot spots will require sophisticated research and intelligence, strategic planning, and comprehensive prevention programs involving many entities working in concert. I believe that senior police officials are capable of meeting this challenge by playing a lead role in multiagency partnerships and accepting the full responsibility that comes with being "the crime experts."

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